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ON PAGE 8

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2 more tied to Pope shooting

ROME (UPI)—At least two other gunmen were in St. Peter's Square ready to shoot Pope John Paul II the day Turkish terrorist Mehmet Ali Agca tried to kill the pontiff in 1981, the Daily American newspaper said Sunday.

The Rome-based, English-language newspaper quoted Vatican sources as saying the information is contained in detailed reports given to the Vatican by Turkish authorities last month.

The Daily American said the Turkish report "emphatically ruled out" speculation that the shooting was a plot by the Soviet KGB to liquidate the Pope because of his support of the Solidarity trade union in Poland.

It said the Turks believed the attack was probably made to draw attention to "antinational elements" in Turkey.

THE SOURCES said the report outlined a "three-angle plan" in which the three gunmen were stationed in key positions in the square, each within easy firing range of the Pope, the paper said.

Agca was the "second station," the sources were quoted as saying, indicating the first gunman did not shoot. He was seized by police shortly after the shooting.

If neither of the three gunmen were able to shoot, the attack was to have been attempted the following week at the Pope's next general audience, the newspaper said.

Agca seriously wounded John Paul in the assassination attempt on May 13, 1981, and is serving a life sentence in Italy for the attack.